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FRANS HALS

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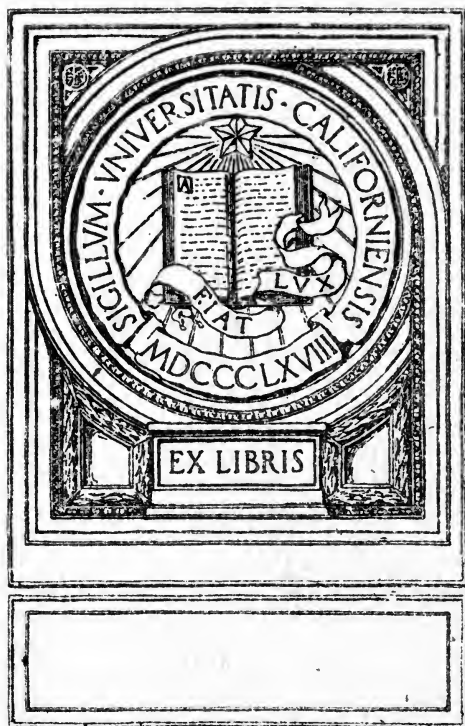
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FRANS HALS



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FRANS HALS  
PORTRAITS OF FRANS HALS AND HIS WIFE  
Rijks Museum, Amsterdam



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ABSTRACT





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FRANS HALS  
"Mlle. BOBBE, THE WITCH OF HAARLEM"  
BERLIN GALLERY

UNIVERSITY  
OF  
CALIFORNIA





TO THE  
APPROPRIATE



TO WHOM  
IT MAY COME



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FRANCIS HAYTER  
REUNION OF THE OFFICERS OF ST. ANDREW, 1683  
MUNICIPAL MUSEUM, HAVRE

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PORTRAIT OF FRANS HALS

MUNICIPAL MUSEUM, HAARLEM

This portrait was purchased from Hals's descendants by Dr. van der Willigen, the historian of his life. It is undoubtedly a likeness of the master, and closely resembles his portrait as one of the minor figures in the group of "The Officers of St. George," painted in 1639. That it was painted by Frans Hals himself, as Dr. van der Willigen believes, is doubtful. It is more probably the work of his brother, his son, or his nephew, all of whom were painters, or of a pupil.



# Frans Hals

BORN 1584?: DIED 1666  
DUTCH SCHOOL

PERCY RENDELL HEAD

"FRANS HALS"

**T**HAT Antwerp claims the honor of having given Frans Hals birth is merely an accident of his origin. His ancestry was Dutch; from the outset of his working life he had become a citizen of Holland; and the characteristics of his art are decidedly opposed to those of the Flemish school, with Rubens at its head.

For two centuries before the artist's birth the Hals family, as its records prove, had occupied a place of high consideration among the patrician houses of Haarlem. Misfortunes consequent upon the war compelled the parents of Frans, in the latter part of the sixteenth century, to quit their native city and seek an asylum in Antwerp. There, and not, as some biographers have asserted, at Mechlin, Frans was born, probably in the year 1584. Nothing is known certainly of his early years; he studied probably at Antwerp in the beginning of his training, and, on the return of his family to Haarlem, entered the school of Karel van Mander. The date of this return can only be conjectured; we ought probably to place it before 1608, if we are to suppose that the "Joost Hals of Antwerp," who in that year was charged before the Haarlem magistrates with drunkenness and disorderly conduct in the streets, was a member of the same family.

It must have been about the year 1610 that Hals married a young lady named Anneke Hermanszoon. On the second of September, 1611, occurred the baptism of their son Harman Hals. His domestic life with this lady cannot have been very happy; on the twentieth of February, 1616, we find him summoned before the magistrates for ill-treating her. He received on this occasion a severe reprimand for his drunken habits and violence, expressed much contrition, and was let off on the understanding that a repetition of the offence would be visited with severe punishment. He was relieved from temptation by the death of his wife, which happened only a few days afterwards — not, we are glad to believe, in consequence of his mishandling, but in the course of nature, as it was not thought necessary to hold any inquest or investigation concerning the causes of her death.

In his second marriage Hals was more fortunate in finding a spouse able to make allowance for his peculiarities of conduct and temper. Her name was Lysbeth Reyniers. They were married on the twelfth of February, 1617, lived together for nearly fifty years, and brought up a large family.

The accounts of Hals's dissolute habits have undoubtedly been much exaggerated. Little as we know of his history, there is plenty of evidence to prove that he was very different from the mere sot which some biographers would have us believe him. It

cannot be denied that he was both intemperate and improvident, and these faults were powerful obstacles to his advancement. If he had been less idle and less fond of pleasure he would have done more work and achieved higher fame; but a man given over altogether to wine-bibbing and low society would hardly enjoy, as Hals did, considerable local reputation in a crowded profession, constant employment during a long working life, and a pension from the State to provide for the wants of his old age. As to those features in his character which are not praiseworthy, the historian need not be harsher than the artist's own contemporaries. His talents were allowed to condone his faults while he lived, and it is with his talents that posterity is chiefly concerned. Even after the wife-beating episode, it does not appear that he was regarded with disfavor among his fellow-citizens; for we find that in 1617 and 1618 Frans and his brother Dirck Hals were elected members of the Guild of Rhetoric, "de Wijngaardranken." They were also members of the Civic Guard, and of the Guild of St. Luke—for Haarlem, like Antwerp, possessed this institution.

In 1642 we find Hals refusing to pay the yearly subscription of six sous exacted from members of the Guild. Whatever his reason was, the matter must have been amicably arranged, for in 1644 his name appears on the committee, which was a small body chosen annually from amongst the most distinguished members of the fraternity. In 1661, in consideration of his poverty and his services to art, the aged painter was excused from payment altogether.

Towards the end of Frans Hals's life his pecuniary difficulties became serious. In 1652, one Jan Ykess, a baker, sued him for a debt of two hundred Carolus guilders, incurred for bread supplied and small loans advanced from time to time, and obtained possession of the artist's movables. The baker was not a hard-hearted creditor; content with a lien upon his debtor's property, he left him the use of it for the time being.

In 1662 Hals was seventy-eight years old, and poverty pressed hard upon him. He applied for relief to the city administration, which readily granted an immediate donation of one hundred and fifty florins, to be paid quarterly. This staved off want for the time, but soon after the quarterly payments ceased he had to renew his appeal to public bounty. On the sixteenth of January, 1664, he appeared again before the city council, who took his case into consideration. A provisional order was issued that three cartloads of peat for fuel should be sent to him, and that those who had a claim against him for rent should apply to the municipality. By the first of February they had come to a decision on his case. He obtained a pension of two hundred Carolus guilders a year, beginning from the first of October, 1663, and to be paid in quarterly instalments.

Hals did not long survive to enjoy the public liberality. He died on or about the twenty-sixth of August, 1666, in his eighty-second or eighty-third year, and was buried on the first of September, beneath the choir of the Church of St. Bavon, in Haarlem.

## The Art of Frans Hals

WILHELM BODE

"FRANS HALS UND SEINE SCHULE"

THE first thing that strikes one in studying the works of Frans Hals is his limitation, his one-sidedness in regard to the choice of his subjects—in short, an undeniable poverty of invention. Exclusively a portrait-painter, even his pictures representing the life of the people are only a kind of genre-portraits. It may be that one reason for

this peculiarity is to be found in the individuality of the artist himself, but it must be attributed still more to the desire of the Dutch people to have their portraits painted — a desire which was but the outcome of the times, and in which is to be found the true explanation of this one-sidedness in Frans Hals.

Historical painting in Holland, based as it was upon the dead-and-gone traditions which had been received from Italy, had become so deeply rooted that it was long looked upon as great and true art. The most talented artists, however, turned from the painting of history to a closer study of nature — namely, to portraiture, a branch of art which will always engage the attention of the greatest masters in those countries where a people, through its own exertions, has worked its way upwards and come to a realization of its own importance. This it was, coupled with a rugged kind of individuality from which sprang a certain self-consciousness, that was the foundation-stone of the character of the Dutch people. What wonder, then, that each man, recognizing that all that had been accomplished was owing to individual exertion, found in his own person the worthiest object for artistic representation, and that the greatest of their artists turned their attention to the painting of portraits!

This marked characteristic of his people which made a portrait-painter of Frans Hals is exactly what he embodies in his portraits, and this he conceives more strikingly and reproduces more intelligently than any of his contemporary countrymen. None but a truly great artist has the power of stamping his portraits not only with individual peculiarities, but with the general characteristics of his time and country. To vividly express just these and never to strive for a deceptive resemblance through trifling externalities should be his highest aim. That Frans Hals attained this goal assures him his place among the greatest portrait-painters of all time.

Modern Dutch art has, in countless historical pictures, endeavored to immortalize the most illustrious events in Holland's great past in her struggle for freedom. But not one of these productions conveys the spirit of that time so well as a single portrait from the hand of Hals. Whether his men are assembled for the practice of arms or for consultation over the welfare of the Fatherland, whether the master paints them in public festivities or in the intimacy of the family circle, they are men who have grown up amid the dangers of war and of the sea; men who were willing to stake all for convictions, freedom, and faith, but who also strove for their own advantage; men of the strongest passions, but governed and controlled by keen understandings and iron wills. A deeper spiritual meaning is for the most part wanting in his pictures, but we do not miss it, for it would hardly be in keeping with the portraits of these energetic, cold, calculating men with their strongly marked individuality, their naïve self-consciousness.

In the numerous genre-pictures by Frans Hals, of which unfortunately only a few have been preserved, a similar character is observable; indeed, to such an extent is this the case that, as I have already said, they can only incorrectly be described as genre-pictures. The life-sized figures of singing and playing boys, of musicians, mongers, jolly toppers, and idle wenches are really portraits taken from the lower classes of the people, whose extravagant, irrepressible humor springs from the same source as does the haughty, high-bred self-assurance which is expressed in his portraits of the upper classes. How little Frans Hals strove to produce an exclusively genre-picture is most clearly seen in his works containing a number of figures, wherein no attempt at composition is perceptible. But for what they pretend to be, — true and lifelike reproductions of types of the people, — these studies are on a level with the portraits of the master, and give us their complement, the contrast of the aristocratic world.

Frans Hals's manner of painting is in keeping with his conception. The artistic principle which characterizes Dutch painting in regard to color and the mastery of tone is particularly striking in his work. Hals depicts his people just as he saw them and knew

them in the street, in the field, in public life. He paints them in ordinary daylight — not as Rembrandt did, in the half-light of an interior. His light is evenly distributed; the color seems only so far affected as it would naturally be by the open air. For the sake of a uniform lighting, the artist did not choose bright sunlight, which in any rich material would produce vivid lights and deep shadows, but rather a subdued daylight, which gives sufficient prominence to the local color. With all the brilliant coloring which he knew so well how to develop in the rich and variegated costumes of his military pieces, he nevertheless subordinates it with the greatest delicacy to the flesh tones. He makes the intellectual predominate over the material, allows the dress only just what is needed to make its wearer understood, determines the arrangement of his pictures by the local coloring, concentrates the interest upon the head as the intellectual centre and upon the hands as direct interpreters of character.

Even Hals's drawing is determined by his manner of coloring. When we see how he distributes the light and paints in the colors in great masses, we cannot be surprised to observe the same broad style, aiming only at the essential points, in his drawing also. Although a rigorous realist, Hals pays no attention to any slight and accidental peculiarities of his models, but subordinates these details throughout to the general impression. In his drawing, in which the brush plays a prominent rôle, he defines the body only in its most important lines and movements, and the garments only in large, simple folds, whereby his uniform lighting and his clear, quiet tone of color is made possible. Naturally the execution is determined by means of this artistic conception of the painter's. He goes only just far enough to make his conception fully intelligible; never, however, at the cost of expression. It is for this reason that an interpretation by Frans Hals is especially telling.

It is in the execution that we can most clearly see how the master, following these general principles, always took into consideration the individuality of each person, but how his treatment in the course of his development, which we can follow during a period of fifty years, was subjected to marked changes in manner. These changes accord with the effort, pre-eminent with Hals as with all great artists, to express himself ever more concisely, and yet at the same time more clearly. Consequently, he suppresses the execution more and more, simplifies drawing and color, but, on the other hand, lays greater stress on the tone. The military group of the year 1616, in the Haarlem Museum, reminds one in its strong coloring, its intensely brown tone, in its mellow lights and careful execution, of the Netherland manner of painting in the sixteenth century. Scarcely ten years later the artist was at the height of his originality; the local color was more strongly accented, the coloring clear and bright, the treatment marvellously free. Before the year 1635 the color began to grow deeper, the lighting more uniform, the general tone to prevail more strongly. The passing influence of Rembrandt upon Frans Hals, which occurred between the years 1635 and 1642, only served to mark and develop this new tendency more strongly. As simple black costumes became all the fashion at this time, Hals consequently gave even the coloring of the flesh a gray tone. The reds of the flesh in his pictures might be most aptly compared — if such comparisons are allowable — with the patina which bronze acquires, and the coloring of the flesh corresponded in the master's different periods to a brownish, a golden, an olive-green, and finally, even, to a blackish patina. This prevailing gray tone marks his treatment from the year 1640 until his death — that is, through a period of twenty-five years. He became ever broader in his manner of working, ever more sparing of color, until finally, in the two regent pieces of the year 1664, he reached the utmost limit of breadth and of monochromy.

Generally speaking, the tone of a picture may be regarded as the reflex of the artist's mood. Rubens' old age, highly favored as it was, and radiant with happiness, found

distinct expression in the bright and glowing tone with which the colors of his later works are so resplendent. Rembrandt, under heavy misfortune, long painted in a correspondingly sombre and colorless tone, but in the golden glow of his last pictures we read his return to inward calm and composure. It is very different with Frans Hals. Abandoned by the world, without the requisite repose in his inner life, he saw things only in gray tones, barely allowing them their natural forms, and withholding from them their fresh colors. As his fellow-men granted him only what was needful for the bare maintenance of life, so the old man of eighty years gave to the figures in his last pictures only enough form and color to allow them to appear like living beings.—FROM THE GERMAN.

C. VOSMAER

"EAUX-FORTES D' APRÈS FRANS HALS"

**B**ORN twenty-two years before Rembrandt, Hals died but three years before him. He lived through more than one period of Dutch art. He saw the older school of Haarlem still flourishing in her latest masters, Van Mander, Goltzius, Cornelis Cornelissen, and E. Verspronck. He was the eldest among the moderns proper. He stood in the front rank of the school in its prime, and, himself unenfeebled, saw, under a later generation, its after-blossom and the beginning of the artistic decline. On the other hand, the circle of his own labors was not a wide one. He painted many pictures, but strictly speaking, they are all portraits; even his pictures of popular life are both in style and composition rather portraits from life than genre-pictures. This is, however, no reason to lower our estimate of his genius. To paint portraits as he painted them comprises much. Technically, there is nothing more difficult, and moreover, a true portrait is no mere reflection of the outward semblance of the sitter at a given moment; it embraces and shows in that image the man in his whole life and being. Hals, like Rembrandt and like all the greatest masters in portraiture, reveals the entire personality, lays stress on the features that form character, discards the temporary and subordinate, and transforms the momentary image into a living being.

But though in Hals's portraits, as in Rembrandt's, life and character are fully represented, the two painters differ totally in their manner of treatment. Rembrandt transfigures his personages, as it were, by his poetry of light and color, and charms by the subtle effects of light and color on the visual nerves of the beholder; Hals presents his figures in a less ideal manner, and rather preserves the proportions of real life and the light of real day. He does not so take the imagination prisoner, but on the other hand he appeals more fully to the whole mind. Rembrandt contracts his eyes and hatches illusions of light; Hals opens his own wide and laughs, and drinks in the full sparkle of life. Rembrandt concentrates all the light in a supernatural glow; Hals spreads the common light of day over his whole canvas. The former transforms local colors into quite ideal combinations, his brush is continually digging and kneading, as it were, in colors and in tones; the latter rather preserves the true colors of the objects, and, with an astonishingly certain touch and full consciousness of what he aims to do, lays in the required tints and forms immediately and unerringly. The palettes of the two had, I think, totally different aspects. Rembrandt's, with its mixture of many colors, already foreshadowed the effect of his work; on Hals's few colors lay next one another, less run together, and his brush laid the clear tone on freshly.

Technique is an essential part of every art. Like execution in music, the *manner* of representation in painting is of the greatest importance. It shows not only what Hals called "the evidence of the master's hand," but "style" is closely connected with it, and the technical skill in representation contributes a great part of the enjoyment that works of art afford. One painting may evince much talent, even genius, and yet the manner of painting may be uneasy, restrained, disagreeable. Another picture, without

showing much inspiration, may be most beautiful solely on account of the technical mastery — the boldness, ingeniousness, nicety, and the playful ease in its rendering. Rembrandt united both gifts. Hals's scope was not so wide. That the higher genius was not lacking, indeed, is evidenced by the vivacity, character, and personality with which he endows his portraits, and the expression of popular life in his genre-pictures. But his work acquires perhaps its greatest value from his *manner* of representation. Without it, his portraits would be true and natural; with it, they are much more than this.

As Rembrandt van Rijn ranks first on the serious side of Dutch painting, and as in his work we find the deepest feeling and the richest imaginative charm, so to Frans Hals we accord superiority on the side of free, unrestrained, and unaffected naturalness. There is the same humorous joyousness in his work as sparkles through old Dutch art and finds its laughing fellow in old Dutch comedy. — FROM THE FRENCH.

WILLIAM HOWE DOWNES

"TWELVE GREAT ARTISTS"

FRANS HALS may be ranked as a portrait-painter alongside of the greatest, not only for his unexcelled virtuosity, in which he is allowed to be a past master and the peer of Rubens and Veronese, but also for his elegance and distinction of style, his profound knowledge of human nature, his irresistible and contagious humor, his grasp of character, and his phenomenal capacity to express the most elusive and subtle personal traits.

The fine things, in a more technical sense, about Hals's paintings are their tremendous spirit and vivacity; their ease, dash, fluency, bravura; their wonderful freedom and looseness of touch; their splendid breadth and largeness of effect; their brilliant and mellow color; their firm, true, and bold draughtsmanship; their infallibly good arrangement. Difficulties seem not to have existed for him; or, rather, to have existed simply to give him the joy of overcoming them. There has never been a painter in any school or age who understood better and controlled more fully the resources of his art. He was a magician of the brush. . . .

It is hard to say to which period of such a prodigious painter's career belong the brightest honors. Already great in his young days, he seems to have climbed steadily from triumph to triumph, without retrogression and without faltering. The earliest paintings naturally show the most careful regard for finish; the intermediate works are more confidently executed; and those of the last period are still more broadly and loosely painted. It is the usual order of progression. Hals, with all his power of indicating much by a few strokes, did not disdain finish, nor did he ever intentionally slight details; and although he understood so well the useful principle of sacrifices, he knew just when and where to apply it, and when and where not to apply it. He always placed the right emphasis in the most telling place. None of his works, not even the most summary, look unfinished, careless, or slovenly. He could be superbly dashing in his manner, — none more so, — but it is perfectly obvious that he always knew precisely what he was about, never forgot himself, coolly calculated all his effects, and succeeded in stirring others without losing his own *sang-froid*. In a word, he was thoroughly well balanced. . . .

The ease and adroitness of Hals's handiwork are of those delectable qualities that never become otherwise than enjoyable. The touch, which is unlike any other painter's, has something piquant and capricious about it. Light as a feather here, firm as the everlasting hills there; now deliberate, now rapid as a lightning-flash; whatever change may be rung upon it, it is always right, always fit.

JOHN C. VAN DYKE

"OLD DUTCH AND FLEMISH MASTERS"

**H**ALS was primarily a master workman, and it has been said that he was nothing beyond that; but this latter statement should be accepted with some qualifications. It is true that he had not the reflective, the speculative, the romantic temperament. He was a seer and a recorder rather than a thinker; a man devoted apparently to the beautiful in the material rather than in the intellectual, yet far removed from the mere mechanical realist of cold facts. Some natures reveal their artistic feeling in what they say, and others reveal the same feeling in how they say it. We see this continually exemplified in modern poetry, where the artist in language is quite as apparent as the poetic thinker; and modern painting is filled with painters who are poetic only in their means of expression. Frans Hals belonged to this class. He was a painter of great power, and, withal, of great sensitiveness and feeling in the pure art of painting. His work shows to us the shrewd observer of fitness and character, the learned student of tone and relation, the harmonist of full, frank colors, the rhapsodist in all that relates to technical expression. The finer qualities of the man came to the surface through his eyes and finger-tips; but it was no common realist's eye that perceived the beautiful harmonies of silvery whites and blacks in the regents' pictures at Haarlem; it was no mere workman's mind that grouped and held together those great pictures by giving due force and character to each figure in light, in value, and in color; it was no time-serving, mechanical hand that drew and painted them so truly and yet so easily. Frans Hals was something more than a mere technician. He was a great artist. . . .

His subjects, indeed, might be regarded, in a popular sense, as unselect. They were of the common stock from which all the Dutch painters drew, and had nothing whatever to do with the ideal. They were things seen, not imagined; people of Holland, not people of the air. He was peculiarly fond of the bluff, robust type, and he painted it in a fresh, vigorous manner to complement the character. Even his portraits are of this type. They have health and good spirits, substance and shadow, as in nature; but again they have little of the ideal, or what is called in portraiture "character-painting," about them. Hals followed his model, and painted only what was apparent. His well-fed burghers probably showed little more than physical life, and he was not the man to paint false character into a face. He was not a Van Dyck, painting scholars, lords, and princes; and he had little use for the intellectual gaze, the refined face, and the lordly air. Possibly he never had a chance to paint men of noble mien; and yet it is more probable that his sympathies went out to people of his own kind, and that he painted the frankly human because he believed in it and loved it for its truth's sake. His other subjects would seem to indicate this. He is always free, vivacious, hearty, full of animal spirits. Sometimes he lightly jests, as in the portraits of himself and wife at Amsterdam; sometimes he is whimsical and boisterous, as with his Fools and Jolly Men; and sometimes he is sober, sedate, calm, as in his Haarlem pictures. Good-natured, candid, and honest, he is always pleasing and never frivolous. Whatever may be his subject, he is serious in its handling. And that brings us around to our first conclusion,—that the real feeling and power of the painter lay in his methods of expression. What he said was often coarse; but his manner of saying was eloquent, cultured, refined. His was the poetry of rhythmical color, light, and handling.

As a technician, Hals had few equals, and it is hardly extravagant to say that he had no superior. Velasquez and Rubens were different, and as artists they were greater; but as pure painters they were not more individual or more certain than was Hals. In drawing and modelling he was remarkable for giving the truth of mass and bulk in the physical presence. Flesh, bone, brawn and weight he could translate with convincing precision. This effect he gained not by line drawing. He was not a man of clear outline like Hol-

bein. His modelling was effected by regarding the exact relations of color-tones. The black hat and white ruff of the "Jolly Man" do not hold their place by virtue of their outline or rim, but by virtue of their mass in black or white, each mass exactly true in value, and properly related to the head and to each other. This scrupulous regard for values enabled him to paint with flat tones, and thereby suggest modelling without actually giving it. The black hat has a crown to it, though it is not seen; the brim circles the head, though at the back it is only indicated. The variation in the shades of black gives modelling, and suggests what is not shown. In this flat painting Hals anticipated Manet and all the Whistlerians by two hundred years; and for this very feature he is greatly admired by the moderns of to-day. It speaks strongly for the genius of the man that he did not learn or appropriate this from any master or school. He originated it.

In the handling of light Hals was quite different from Rembrandt and the painters who were born a few years after him. He did not display it in spots upon the canvas, or break the continuity of the picture by several focuses. There is nothing forced about his illumination. The light came not from the sky, but chiefly from the figures themselves, as was the manner of treatment employed by the great Italians. In color he was at first a little florid, and perhaps lacking in depth and delicacy; but he soon began to employ a richer and more mellow palette, upon which all colors seemed to be placed,—orange, red, blue, green, brown, gray, black. These he used with great purity and tenderness, showing always the sense of a colorist in giving the proper fitness, resonance, and relationship of colors, under light and under shadow. Late in life his hand failed him, but not his eye. The colors became subdued, and he grew fond of rich blacks and pearly whites flecked with gray. He was less sparkling, less varied, but even more refined and harmonious. He now threw his remaining strength upon the general tone-effect, and gained a charm of sobriety. It was the final, perhaps the highest step as a colorist in the painter's life, but it is marred by the feeling that it was in measure a makeshift to hide the inequalities of a failing hand.

It is not wonderful that the hand of a person of eighty-four should forget its cunning. The man, physically, was sunk in twilight; the feebleness of old age was upon him; but in the days of his strength there never was a more positive and powerful brushman. His handling is of superb freedom and dash. A staccato quality in it lends to it energy and vivacity. He did not often indulge in the long serpentine sweep of Rubens. He used little oil, and his pigment was not so fluid as that of the great Fleming. He modelled by spots and areas, painted often in patches, and occasionally dashed in a hat or cloak with a large, full-loaded brush. He knew almost infallibly just where to begin, just how far to carry, just when to stop. He never tortured, or dragged, or thumbed; he struck swiftly and accomplished his aim at one blow. We gain no idea of correction or emendation from his work. It looks to be done once and finally, and that, too, with the ease of a hand that does not pause to deliberate, but dashes forward, fully conscious of its touch and certain of its result. Hals is again strictly original in all this. His brush-work, so much admired and studied by modern painters, followed no tradition, and was not learned or imitated from others. It was invented, created, improvised by Hals to suit his conceptions and characters, and is a positive stamp of his own individuality. It is in itself, aside from the other qualities he possessed, sufficient to mark him as a technician of extraordinary resources, and a painter of prodigious power.

CAMILLE DE RODDASZ

"L'ART" 1878

HALS must have painted rapidly; and seen close, his portraits are marvellous. It is hardly possible to believe in such surety, such boldness of touch; the lights, the shades, all the tones, seem to be put in at one single swoop, just in the right place and in



the right way to contribute to perfect truth of expression. It seems almost as though he must have determined the place where each touch was to be laid by a pencil sketch; never, except in his early pictures, is this first touch *étalée* or brushed over. Nevertheless, his heads have none of the marquetry look of modern imitators of his manner.

Composition is Hals's weak point. Individually, his figures are naturally posed; indeed, their attitudes are strikingly true to life; but his group pictures, taken as a whole, sometimes lack air and perspective. The art of making sacrifices was evidently not his forte. Even the best of these group pictures gain by being studied in detail. Examined separately, the figures are very fine, but they rarely are so placed as to conduce to the harmony of the whole. They are all principal, all important, all treated as vividly, whatever their position in the picture, as the figures in the front rank. It is to be said in defence, of course, that in such corporation pictures, where each person who was included paid his share, none wished to be subordinate, and that the painter would have had a difficult task to convince any one that it would be necessary to sacrifice him for the benefit of the composition. Rembrandt plainly encountered the same difficulty in his "Anatomy Lesson."—FROM THE FRENCH.

ARSÈNE ALEXANDRE

"HISTOIRE POPULAIRE DE LA PEINTURE"

IT may be questioned whether the combined abilities of all the other painters of Holland, rich in high qualities as they are, would have been sufficient to raise the Dutch school to the eminence it occupies in modern esteem without two of its members, one of whom put into portraiture the profundity of the deepest philosophy and added an unprecedented mystery to mere execution, and another who crowned the perfection of technique, prepared for by generations of eminent Dutch artists, by the supreme touch of a marvellous facility which made the mere painting a thing of joy in itself. The first of these men was Rembrandt; the second was Frans Hals.

The effect which Hals's pictures produce is vivid, and an effect to be grasped in a first impression. One may like his work or one may not, but it is always striking, and never leaves the beholder cold or indifferent. Only at Haarlem and surrounded by his great group pictures is it possible to appreciate Hals at his best and to rightly judge him; but in the Haarlem gallery, with his work hanging on all the walls about you, the effect is wonderful;—living eyes glance at you from all sides, living mouths are just about to speak or to burst into ringing laughter; the whole gallery fairly pulsates with life,—a gay, bustling life of fête-days and reviews, of the excitement of parades in splendid uniforms, and of the convivial reunions that follow. What a clinking of glasses, what a jingling of forks, what a drinking of patriotic toasts, what cordial and friendly banter laughed across the loaded tables! And what a martial air the merry-makers have withal,—the banners of their companies displayed, their silk scarfs glowing against their dark costumes, their hats with swashing cavalier brims, their eyes alert and gleaming, their martial beards and mustachios;—and all of it, all of it, life itself! One seeks in vain for another term to express the sensation. No word but *life* expresses the main characteristic of Hals's work. Nothing can come closer to our humanity than these painted folk of his. To stand opposite a picture by him is like a memorable meeting with personages who look at you, who all but speak and move. Yet, with all this truth to life, there is no attempt at illusion, no vulgar endeavor to fool the eye into mistaking the painted for the actual (a result, by the way, in which the most commonplace artist may succeed as easily as the greatest). There is no deceit in Hals's painting—anything but that. All the varied and delicate processes of his art are made use of in full day, without hypocrisy or disguise. He has only one secret,—if by the "secret" of a painter one means that which he alone pos-

sesses to the exclusion of all rivals, and which makes him, in so far, inimitable,—and that secret is his marvellous technical mastery of hand.

No other painter whosoever is as facile and as prompt in execution as was Hals; no other has ever been less distrustful of his own facility, and therein lies one source of his power. He ceases to be himself if ever, even in the slightest degree and for no matter what object, he checks the freedom of his brush — a point of difference perhaps between a great artist and a wonderful artist. Hals was, however, much more than a virtuoso. To portraits of the uttermost naturalism he succeeds in imparting style,—and moreover the grand style,—conjoining two qualities which seem inherently antipathetic.

Frans Hals was, in addition, possessed, in the highest degree, of the rare gift of tact; a tact equal to his facility, and which gave to that facility its unusual and most precious quality. By this we mean to say, that while Hals's hand was wonderfully supple, agile and sure, a hand that could paint with no matter what materials or what utensils, and while he had also a remarkable truth of eye, these abilities were under the control of that prompt and spontaneous wisdom which in default of a better word we must call "tact." It was his gift, too, to be able to see objects and living beings at the moment when they were, so to say, most significant; when they showed most characteristically. He saw his sitters in both attitude and movement in that lightning-flash when they were most of all their true selves. It was then that the facile and obedient hand played its part, fixing the image hardly less rapidly, it would seem, than the eye had perceived it; and when he had brought the image to that subtle point at which a single touch the more would overweight it, his tact intervened to stop the hand. To know precisely when to stop, that is another of Hals's great gifts — one of the rarest, be it said, among all artists; for it is as easy to carry the work too far as to fall short of the nick of perfection.

Such was Hals's whole secret, and because he was possessed of it his figures overflow with an intensity of life; but the life of each figure he portrayed was an individual life and acquired by no formula used indiscriminately for all. Indeed, it was because he had no set system or method of procedure that Hals seems to have triumphed so easily over all difficulties.

It is true that he gives us no more than life, nothing that humanity itself does not afford; but the rapid dashing-in of the drawing, the humor and exactness of the touch, the evident joy of the artist in his work,—in determining an accessory or a sword-guard with half a dozen strokes, dashing in a mustache, dotting the sparkle in an eye, and as the work progressed, grouping all his personages in such a pleasant hurly-burly of life, vivifying his entire *mise en scène*,—give his realistic art a very precious quality.

Perhaps we do not rate such a temperament as Hals's high enough. It is as rare in nature to produce such a technician as it is to produce the highest type of thinker. The magic hand may give us as much pleasure as the giant brain; and though we may well acknowledge that the great thinker is more valuable to humanity in the large sense than the great virtuoso, in painting, which is a material art dependent upon mere lines and colors that have in themselves qualities and virtues quite independent of the ideas, poetic or philosophical, which may be expressed by them, great virtuosity in itself is a quality as admirable as it is rare. What more is there, intrinsically, in one of Frans Hals's "Civic Guard" groups than a number of personages of his own time, in their own costumes and their accustomed surroundings? Nothing, unless perhaps more spirit than other artists, less facile or more timid, would have been able to put into them. What is there in the mere material painting that is singular or novel? Absolutely nothing! There is not an uncommon tone, not a subtlety of harmony in them. Hals was not born with the distinguishing gift for color which makes certain artists so original. He was only original

in color by his very frankness. He gives us gray costumes or black ones against which he relieves scarfs or sashes of tender blue, or red, or orange; he gets his whites by the use of white paint, and pursues the same simplicity throughout his entire color scheme, whether he is painting garments or faces, banners or blank walls. There is, if I may make the comparison, the same relation between Hals's absolutely straightforward simple painting and the subtle, complex, and mystical style of Rembrandt as between a cunningly prepared liqueur and clear water from a spring.

Hals's sensations were direct sensations, and direct was his painting; but thanks to his mastery of hand, his power of seeing true, and his tact in the use of these gifts, his mere direct statement is endowed with the rarest value, and Frans Hals a great virtuoso becomes also a great painter.—ABRIDGED FROM THE FRENCH.

## The Works of Frans Hals

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE PLATES

“LA BOHÉMIENNE”

LOUVRE: PARIS

“LA BOHÉMIENNE” is a masterpiece of its type. Abounding with health and high spirits, the young gypsy looks out of the frame with the frankest and most contagious of smiles; and no workmanship could be more harmonious with its subject than that which Frans Hals has here bestowed. As Bürger has said, the picture seems to have been improvised in some hour of good humor, when the master's brain and hand were both most happily disposed. The whiteness of the linen, the salmon of the bodice, and the rosy tints of the shining face, all join in a cheerful harmony against the sky-like background of a bluish gray.

“All who were in any way remarkable in Haarlem,” writes Vosmaer, “Calvanistic ministers, Roman Catholic priests, literary men and artists, old women and blooming damsels, ensigns and colonels, knaves and fools, ‘rommelpot’ players, tipplers, Kates and pretty Alices, — all these were spoil for Hals's brush; all made their obeisance to him; all sat for a brief moment on his painting-throne to be graced with the undying beauty of his triumphant art, and then dismissed into personal oblivion. But one and all, as they passed, seem to have fallen under the spell of the ‘jolly’ Frans; for, with the exception of a severe Descartes (who seemed to exist only because he thought) and of a few stately dames and consequential fine gentlemen, they all laugh. If they do not laugh openly, they smile; if they do not smile, at least the prelude to a smile steals over their faces. It seems as if all his subjects, from the very contagion of sitting opposite to him, fell into his sunny mood.”

“PORTRAITS OF FRANS HALS AND HIS WIFE” RYKS MUSEUM: AMSTERDAM

“THE charming picture of Frans Hals with his wife Lysbeth Reyniers,” writes Dr. Bode, “probably dates from about the year 1624. What a jolly couple, not young, but in the prime of life, it shows us! And with what laughing eyes the good Lysbeth — never a beauty, it must be confessed — listens to the banter of her jovial spouse! An example of portraiture of the truest and most lifelike character, the work

is at the same time a great genre-picture, overflowing with humor, wherein, together with the wonderful unity of the composition, there is shown in the artist's conception of the subject the existence of perfect good fellowship between the couple." Lord Ronald Gower suggests that "the idea of being thus represented sitting together like two sentimental lovers seems too much for the gravity of Frans and his wife, and the merriment in their faces and even attitudes is so genuine and natural that it is difficult not to laugh with them and at them."

According to Lafenestre, there is some uncertainty as to whether this picture really represents Hals and his wife, the reason for the doubt being based chiefly upon the lack of resemblance between the man here depicted and the likeness of the artist painted by himself, which shows him as one in the group of the "Feast of Arquebusiers of St. George" at Haarlem.

The prevailing tone of the picture is gray, the costume of the man black, while the woman wears a black skirt and corsage, a mantle of dark violet, and a white cap trimmed with cherry ribbons. In the distance is seen one of the parks of Holland. "The work," writes Bürger, "is that of a great technician, while the fineness of the heads, and their expression, at once reveal the hand of the master portraitist."

"PORTRAIT OF WILLEM VAN HUYTHUYSEN" LIECHTENSTEIN GALLERY: VIENNA

"IN the Liechtenstein Gallery, Vienna," writes Dr. Bode, "there is a full-length portrait of Willem van Huythuysen, citizen of Haarlem. Although surrounded by a number of fine portraits by Rubens and Van Dyck, this picture, with its proud and lifelike figure, imperiously arrests the attention of the spectator. The man stands before us in an embroidered black silk costume, his hat turned back, his left hand resting on his hip, his right, over which his cloak is thrown, resting on a sword. The background is a rich red curtain, and in the distance we have a glimpse of one of the parks of Holland. Roses lie scattered on the floor. The expression of youthful vigor and dignified self-consciousness, the composition great in its seeming simplicity, the thoroughly artistic effect of the rich but delicate coloring, light gray in tone—in short, the whole execution of this wonderful portrait makes it one of the artist's greatest masterpieces."

"PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG WOMAN"

BERLIN GALLERY

THIS portrait of an unknown lady was probably painted about 1625. It shows her dressed in black, with a broad lace-trimmed collar and cuffs, and a small lace cap at the back of her head. Around her neck is a gold chain, and bracelets are on her wrists. The background is light gray, and the treatment of the whole work broad and free. "On account of its fresh and cheerful scheme of color, and its sparkling manner of execution," writes Dr. Bode, "this picture is one of the most beautiful of the artist's early middle period."

"PORTRAIT OF A CHILD AND HER NURSE"

BERLIN GALLERY

THIS portrait of a little girl of the Ilpenstein family belongs to the artist's middle period, having been painted about 1630-1635. "The laughing baby on its nurse's arm," writes Dr. Bode, "is dressed in a stiff costume of golden olive brocade trimmed with lace, and is festooned with chains and jewels like a Dutch beauty in her most elaborate and cumbersome attire. But the little face beams with sheer childish happiness, and the peasant nurse shows off her precious charge with pride and delight."

## "HILLE BOBBE, THE WITCH OF HAARLEM"

BERLIN GALLERY

"HILLE BOBBE, called the 'Witch of Haarlem,'" writes Bürger, "was no doubt a well-known character in her day. She is not beautiful, but she has had the distinction of being painted more valiantly than was ever young and lovely princess; for Frans Hals, evidently smitten with her at first sight (for he painted her more than once), made haste to add her to his gallery illustrating bohemian Holland. Does she not, the roaring old Minerva with her solemn owl, recall the horrible but superb dwarfs of Velasquez? Hals seems to have caught his priestess of wisdom and folly — inspired by owl and beer-mug — at just the instant when she had finished telling him some lively ale-house tale; and, fired by her aspect (for indeed she does seem to belong to the world of Rabelais's creation), gave her the immortality of Panurge, of Falstaff, and of Sancho. I believe that no other painter, neither Rubens, nor Rembrandt, nor Brouwer, nor Jan Steen, nor Velasquez, ever painted a face more vividly expressive."

"What kind of magic arts Hille Bobbe may have practised," writes Knackfuss, "we do not know; but truly a great magician is the painter who can hold us so spell-bound before this almost colorless painting, in which the broad brush-strokes are, so to say, merely thrown, one after another, upon the canvas!"

The picture probably dates somewhere between 1630 and 1640.

## "A JOLLY MAN"

RYKS MUSEUM: AMSTERDAM

THE picture, although one of Hals's lighter subjects, is nevertheless quite as remarkable in point of technique as are his more pretentious works.

"This wild spark," writes Vosmaer, "dwells at present in the Ryks Museum at Amsterdam. During his lifetime his abode was not so elegant, but nevertheless he led a merry life; and here, with his big hat on the back of his head, he laughs the boisterous laugh of the wanton, unrestrained spendthrift. Thick-tongued, he sings and laughs, gesticulating meanwhile with his right hand: —

'I have emptied three flacons of wine,  
Every one of them filled to the brim!'

He is dressed with a trace of shabby gentility, in a brownish-yellow suit, with a crumpled, dirty collar and ruffles. With the fingers of his left hand he holds one of those green Rhenish wine-glasses that we fanciers are so fond of possessing. The light grayish-yellow background, and the yellowish and sometimes golden tones of the whole, mark this picture as contemporary with that of the Civic Guard of 1627."

"The execution of this picture is marvellous!" writes Richtenberger. "The colors are dabbed on, one beside another, without mixing, and with the supremest audacity. The shadows are made up of just such apparent daubs, and the high lights seemed dashed in anyhow, as if by pure luck — but with what wonderful sureness of hand! The execution is the work of an impressionist — but what an impressionist!"

## "PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN"

NATIONAL GALLERY: LONDON

THIS admirably characteristic and lifelike portrait of an unknown woman is signed with Frans Hals's monogram, but it is not dated. It is painted with more finish than was usual with him; and indeed he seems to have generally abandoned something of his dashing manner in painting women of the better class, feeling perhaps that a smoother style was more adapted to such subjects; but in doing so he has, in this instance at least, lost nothing of vigor or of the vital quality.

## "PORTRAIT OF AN ADMIRAL"

THE HERMITAGE: ST. PETERSBURG

"THE year 1639," writes Knackfuss, "was one of bitter strife, but full of glory for the Netherlands. Two successive victories were gained by Admiral Tromp over a proud Spanish fleet, and all Europe was forced to recognize the young navy of Holland as the first sea power in the world. If we would have a true conception of the heroes who fought with Tromp for the freedom and honor of their native land, no more expressive and characteristic head could be found than that in the splendid portrait of an unknown officer (generally called an admiral) painted by Frans Hals at this very time. The picture represents a man still youthful in appearance, who, with a self-conscious but artless bearing, turns a little to one side to look at us. Behind him is a view of the scene of his deeds of valor,—the wide, dark sea. Years of combat with wind and weather, as well as with the weapons of the foe, have hardened and toughened the naturally rounded face, each feature of which tells of the strength of an iron will and the bold spirit of adventure. But it is also evident that this hardened warrior is quite ready to enjoy to the full every pleasure of life which the passing moment may offer. Well suited to his weather-beaten face is the framing of thick hair, falling in waves from under his broad-brimmed felt hat like the mane of a lion."

## "REUNION OF THE OFFICERS OF ST. ANDREW"

MUNICIPAL MUSEUM: HAARLEM

IN Hals's time Dutch artists were frequently commissioned to paint groups of officers of the several military companies, or guilds, which formed the civic guards of the various cities, and which also shared in the national defence, and had recently played prominent parts in freeing the country from the Spanish yoke. The so-called "Night Watch" by Rembrandt was such a picture. Between the years 1616 and 1639, Frans Hals painted five of these military groups, and they are considered his greatest achievements. All of them are now in the Municipal Museum of Haarlem. The largest of the series represents a reunion of the officers of the Company of Arquebusiers of St. Andrew under their colonel, John Claeszoon Loo, who is seated in the foreground at the left. It was painted in 1633, and is ranked as Hals's masterpiece. It represents the fourteen officers, at life size, assembled in the garden of the Company's "Doelen," or shooting-hall. The background is formed by a wooden palisade, through the open door of which is seen a glimpse of houses and a bit of sky. Against this dark background of palisade, brown foliage, and red roofs, the ruddy faces, the colored coats with white facings, the orange, blue, and white scarfs, and the banners are strongly relieved.

"In the attitudes, in unity of tone, and in harmony of tints," writes Vosmaer, "this picture ranks with the very greatest. The technique, while still preserving the free and easy, is more elaborate, more searching in the modelling, mellower and finer in the various tones, than the others in the series. In color-scheme, russet here gives place to various harmonies of gray, yellow, and brilliant olive green."

"This picture, a wholly beautiful work in his richest and most sparkling style, is Hals's masterpiece," writes Fromentin. "It is not his most forcible achievement, but it is his most lofty,—the richest, most substantial, most serious of all. There is no idiosyncrasy about it, no placing the figures *out* of the air rather than in it, and creating a void about them. Neither is any one of the difficulties of an art which when thoroughly mastered accepts and resolves all difficulties here shirked or avoided. Perhaps taken individually, the heads are less perfect, less spiritually expressive, than some of his earlier groups; but with this exception, which is an accident that might be the

fault of the models as well as of the painter, the picture is as a whole superior. The background is dark, and consequently the values are reversed, and the black of the velvets, silks, and satins plays with more fancifulness on it; the colors are relieved against it with a breadth, certainty, and harmony that Hals never exceeded. The material treatment, too, is of the rarest kind. The handling is free, intelligent, supple, and bold; never foolish, never insignificant; everything is treated according to its interest, its own nature, and its value. In one detail application is felt; another is hardly touched. A sentiment of the substance of things prevails. Everything is made clear with half a word, as it were, yet nothing but the useless is omitted. The touch is expeditious, prompt, and sharp; the true phrase, and nothing but the true phrase, is found at once. There is no overloading; no turbulence and no superfluity. The artist shows as much taste as Van Dyck, as much skilful execution as Velasquez, and deals with the manifold difficulties of a palette infinitely richer. Such are, in the full brilliancy of his experience and fire, the almost unique qualities of this fine painter. Never was there better painting; never will there be better painting!"

THE PRINCIPAL PAINTINGS OF FRANS HALS, WITH THEIR PRESENT LOCATIONS

**A**LTHORPE, ENG., EARL SPENCER'S COLLECTION: Portrait of Admiral de Ruyter—AMSTERDAM, RYKS MUSEUM: Frans Hals and his Wife (Plate II); A Jolly Man (Plate VII)—AMSTERDAM, TOWN HALL: "Doelenstück" (A Shooting-gallery)—AMSTERDAM, MUSEUM VAN DER HOOP: Portrait of an Old Lady—AMSTERDAM, SIX COLLECTION: Portrait of a Man; Lute-player—AMSTERDAM, VAN DER KELLEN COLLECTION: Portrait of an Old Man and Wife—ANTWERP MUSEUM: Fisher-boy—BERLIN GALLERY: Hille Bobbe, the Witch of Haarlem (Plate VI); Two Portraits of Young Men; Portrait of a Young Woman (Plate IV); Singing Boy; A Jolly Tooper; Portrait of an Old Man; Portrait of Joannes Acronius; Portrait of a Nobleman; Portrait of a Child and her Nurse (Plate V); Portrait of Tyman Oosdorp—BOSTON, ART MUSEUM: Portrait of Count Falkenstein—BRUSSELS MUSEUM: Portrait of W. Van Huythuysen; Portrait of a Man—BRUSSELS, AREMBERG COLLECTION: Two Singing Boys; A Jolly Tooper—CASSEL GALLERY: Jolly Topers; Singing Boys; Portraits of a Nobleman and his Wife; Portrait of a Young Man; Portraits of Two Gentlemen—CHICAGO, ART INSTITUTE: Portrait of Harman Hals—DELFT, CLU-  
VENIRSDOELEN: Shooting-piece—DRESDEN, ROYAL GALLERY: Two Portraits of Men—FRANKFORT, STÄDEL MUSEUM: Portraits of a Young Man and Wife; Portrait of a Lady; Portrait of a Youth—GOTHA GALLERY: Two Portraits of Young Men—HAARLEM, MUNICIPAL MUSEUM: Banquet of Officers of Arquebusiers of St. George, 1616 (12 figures); Banquet of Officers of Arquebusiers of St. George, 1627 (11 figures); Banquet of Officers of Arquebusiers of St. Andrew, 1627; Reunion of Officers of Arquebusiers of St. Andrew, 1633 (Plate X); Officers and Sergeants of Arquebusiers of St. George; Governors of the Elizabeth Hospital; Governors of the Hospital for Old Men; Lady Governors of the Hospital for Old Women; Portraits of Albert van Nierop and his Wife—HAARLEM, HOFJE VAN BERENSTEYN: Portraits of Nicolaas van Berensteyn and his Wife; Young Girl of the Berensteyn Family—HAARLEM, COPES VAN HASSELT COLLECTION: Junker Ramp; Two Boys Singing—HAMPTON COURT, ENG.: Portrait of a Young Man—THE HAGUE GALLERY: Portraits of Jacob Pietersz Olycan and his Wife—LONDON, NATIONAL GALLERY: Portrait of a Woman (Plate VIII); Portrait of a Man—LONDON, BUCKINGHAM PALACE: Portrait of a Man—LONDON, BRIDGEWATER HOUSE: Head of an Old Woman—LONDON, EARL OF NORTHBROOK'S COLLECTION: Herring-seller—LONDON, WALLACE COLLECTION: Portrait of an Officer—NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM: Hille Bobbe von Haarlem; Portrait of a Man; Wife of Frans Hals; The Smoker—PARIS, LOUVRE: Portrait of René Descartes; Portrait of a Woman; "La Bohémienne" (Plate I);

Berensteyn Family Group—PARIS, PRIVATE COLLECTIONS: Two Portraits of W. van Huythuysen; Three Portraits of Men; Portrait of a Woman; Portraits of an Old Man and Wife; Portraits of a Gentleman and Wife; Two Portraits of Young Ladies; Portrait of an Elderly Lady; Rommelpotspeeler; Three Pictures of Jolly Toppers; Portrait of Dr. M. Middelhoven; Portrait of Schrevelius and his Wife; Portrait of Schade van Hestrum; Portrait of Pieter van Broecke; Fisher-boy; Table Company—SCHWERIN GALLERY: Portrait of a Man; Drinking Children; Laughing Children; Young Bagpipe-players; Guitar-players—ST. PETERSBURG, HERMITAGE: Two Portraits of Men; Portrait of a Youth; Portrait of an Admiral (Plate IX); Portrait of an Armorer—VIENNA, IMPERIAL GALLERY: Portrait of a Young Man—VIENNA, LIECHTENSTEIN GALLERY: Portrait of Willem van Huythuysen (Plate III).

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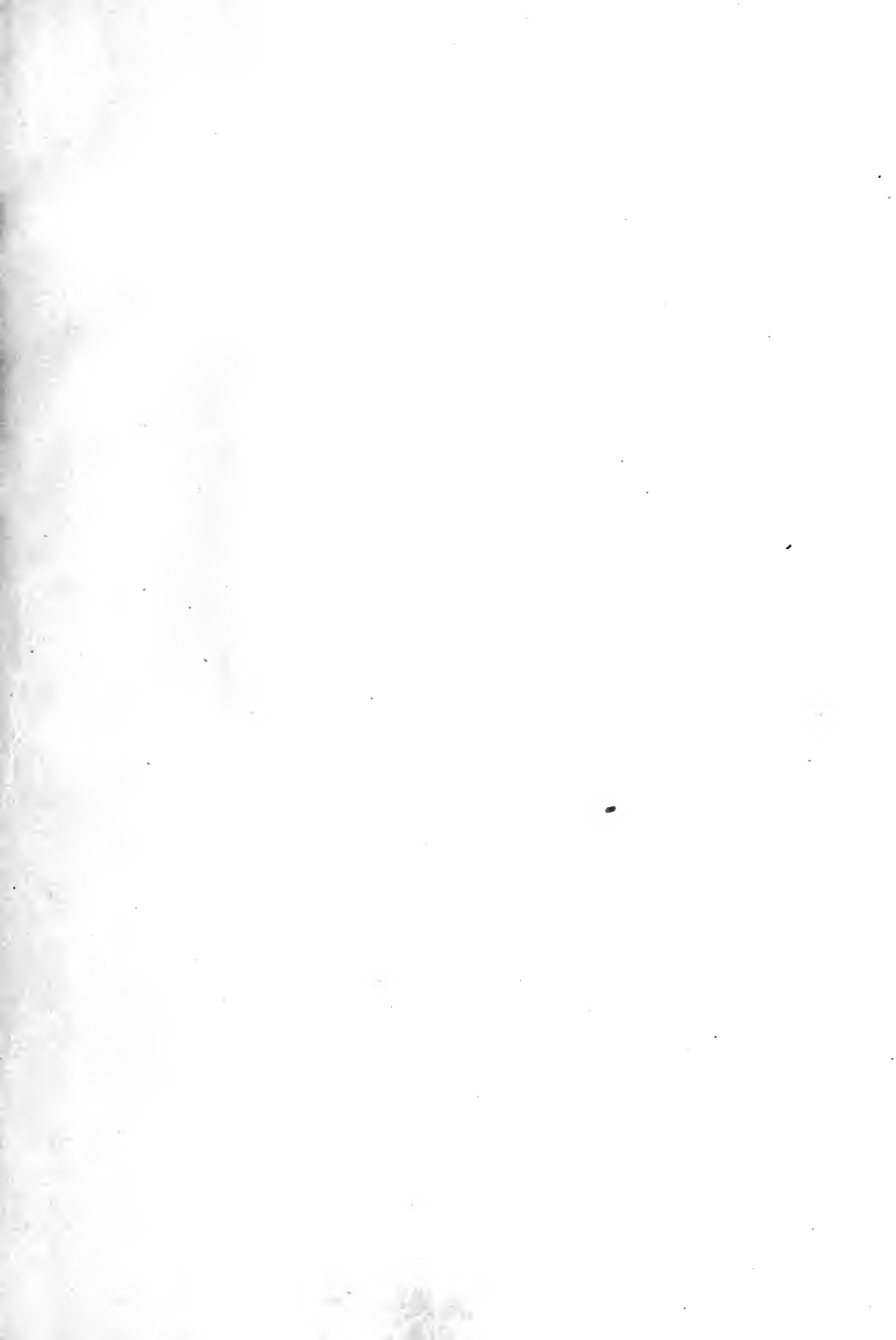
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DEALING WITH FRANS HALS AND HIS SCHOOL

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